

# 2 Corinthians

Class Notes for the Highland Church of Christ

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2011

# 2 Corinthians

Outline Adapted from unpublished manuscript by James Thompson

1. The Credibility of the Minister (1:1-2:13)
  - a. Introduction (1:1-11)
  - b. Paul's Travel Plans as a Demonstration of His Desire for Mutual Joy (1:12-2:13)
    - i. The Guiding Principles of Paul's Ministry (1:12-14)
    - ii. Paul's Sincerity and God's Faithfulness (1:15-22)
    - iii. Paul's Concern for the Corinthians (1:23-2:13)
2. We Do Not Lose Heart (2:14-5:10)
  - a. Paul's Confidence in His Glorious Ministry (2:14-4:6)
    - i. The Victory Processional (2:14-17)
    - ii. You Are Our Letter (3:1-6)
    - iii. The Glory of Ministry (3:7-18)
    - iv. We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord (4:1-6)
  - b. A Ministry Empowered by God (4:7-5:10)
3. An Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-7:6)
  - a. Paul's Ministry as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)
  - b. Paul's Hardships as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (6:3-7:4)
    - i. Credentials for Ministry (6:3-13)
    - ii. Come Out from among Them (6:14-7:4)
  - c. A Time for Rejoicing (7:5-16)
4. The Grace that Continues (8-9)
  - a. The Partnership of Giving (8)
  - b. The Blessings of Giving (9)
5. The Final Appeal (10-13)
  - a. True and False Boasting (10:1-18)
    - i. Boasting in the Lord (10:12-18)
  - b. The Fool's Speech (11:1-12:13)
    - i. The Prologue (11:1-21)
    - ii. Boasting in Weakness (11:22-33)
    - iii. Boasting and Spiritual Experience (12:1-13)
  - c. The Final Argument (12:14-13:13)
    - i. A Ministry for Others (12:14-21)
    - ii. Examine Yourselves (13:1-10)
    - iii. God's Grace (13:11-13)

## 2 Corinthians Schedule

Week 1	Introduction (1:1-14)
Week 2	Paul's Travel Plans as a Demonstration of His Desire for Mutual Joy (1:12-2:13)
Week 3	Paul's Confidence in His Glorious Ministry (2:14-4:6) The Victory Processional (2:14-17) You Are Our Letter (3:1-6)
Week 4	The Glory of Ministry (3:7-18)
Week 5	We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord (4:1-6)
Week 6	A Ministry Empowered by God (4:7-5:10)
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/> A Ministry Empowered by God (4:7-5:10) [part 2]
Week 8	Paul's Ministry as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Paul's Ministry as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-6:2) (part 2)
Week 10	Paul's Hardships as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (6:3-7:4)
Week 11	A Time for Rejoicing (7:5-16); Introduction to Giving (8 & 9)
Week 12	The Partnership of Giving (8)
Week 13	The Blessings of Giving (9)
Week 14	True and False Boasting (10:1-18)
Week 15	The Fool's Speech (11:1-12:13)
Week 16	The Fool's Speech: Boasting and Spiritual Experience (12:1-13)
Week 17	The Final Argument (12:14-13:13)

- The primary source for the class is from Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: WJK, 2003).

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction (1:1-14)</b>
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### **1. Argument of the Text**

How does a minister demonstrate his or her credibility?

Preachers are human. They too often boast and brag in order to bolster their reputation.

So, what is it that drives Paul to such boasting? Paul has to defend his ministry. Some opponents have come into earshot of the Corinthians and have caused these Christians to have doubts about Paul and his ministry. And it wasn't a hard job. They simply pointed out the truth: Paul was weak and was suffering, pushed down, and smacked down at every turn. If God was blessing him, it certainly wasn't with success.

Paul is boasting. What really motivates Paul to brag?

What is the content of his bragging?

Apply Paul's bragging principle to our congregation?

### **2. Memorable Text: God's Comfort**

To reclaim the community, Paul claims there is good news about suffering and weakness. The opponents say Paul's weak. Paul says, "good!" Weakness is the key to rebuilding the church. And this good news is not new. Israel learned the lesson throughout its history. The Psalmist repeats the good news repeatedly. And it is good news you know here.

- a. Christians are not immune from suffering. ...
- b. Our Christian suffering is a participation in the suffering of Jesus. This text is not talking about human infirmities. Paul is not talking about disease, accidents, physical pains, or aging and death. The suffering described here is the suffering that comes by giving oneself for the sake of others. Jesus sacrificed himself on our behalf. Paul suffered for the sake of the Corinthians.
- c. God consoles. God deeply desires to comfort his people. God reaches out his arms of comfort and embraces his people with safety and peace.
- d. Receiving God's comfort gives God's people the strength to comfort others. The church becomes the place for consolation. The sharing of pain brings communities together.
- e. The Gospel — human weakness is the occasion for the demonstration of the power of God.

<b>Week2</b>	<b>Paul's Travel Plans as a Demonstration of His Desire for Mutual</b>
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	<b>Joy (1:12-2:13)</b>
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**1. Argument of the Text****A Second Way to Outline 2 Corinthians**

- i. Paul's Travel Plans as a Demonstration of His Desire for Mutual Joy (1:12-2:13) [Compare to 2 Cor 7:2-4]
  1. The Guiding Principles of Paul's Ministry (1:12-14)
  2. Paul's Sincerity and God's Faithfulness (1:15-22)
  3. Paul's Concern for the Corinthians (1:23-2:13) [Compare to 2 Cor 7:5-16]

*At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians, Paul promises to continue the conversation with the community on his next journey (1 Cor. 16:5-8). He sends the letter with Timothy, whom Paul commissions to explain his ways (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). The evidence from 2 Corinthians suggests that Timothy finds even more problems during his visit to Corinth. Timothy's report results in the "painful visit" (2 Cor. 2:1), in which Paul faces open rebellion from some of the Corinthians (cf. 2:5-11). He returns and writes a letter "with many tears" (2:4), attempting to correct the situation in Corinth. He sends the letter by Titus, hoping to meet him later in Troas (2:12-13) and to receive a report on the Corinthian situation. When Paul finally encounters Titus in Macedonia, he receives a favorable report about the Corinthians. Titus reports that the Corinthians have repented of their open rebellion, and that they desire to see Paul again (7:5-16). Titus brings the news that Paul's severe letter has brought the desired results, and Paul expresses relief and satisfaction at the congregation's change of heart. James Thompson, *Preaching 2 Corinthians* (unpublished manuscript).*

Even though some may accuse Paul that he makes his plans "according to ordinary human standards" (*kata sarka*, 1:17), Paul takes his stand on God's faithfulness. Paul appeals to the "Amen" of God (2 Cor. 1:18-22). Based on Paul's love, Paul changes his mind (2 Cor. 1:23-2:4).

How valid is the argument that Paul must be fickle or unreliable because he did not keep his word about coming to see them?

**2. Memorable Texts**

What principles emerge from the narrative about this unknown person who has sinned (2:5-11)?

Did Paul sin by not staying in Troas? (2:12-13). [The question was asked in the NIB Commentary.]

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Paul's Confidence in His Glorious Ministry (2:14-4:6) The Victory Processional (2:14-17) You Are Our Letter (3:1-6)</b>
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### **1. Argument of the Text**

- a. We Do Not Lose Heart (2:14-5:10)
  - i. Paul's Confidence in His Glorious Ministry (2:14-4:6)
    1. The Victory Processional (2:14-17)
    2. You Are Our Letter (3:1-6)

### **The Metaphors of Ministry**

#### **The Parade of Victory**

- Paul's apparent failure is described as a triumphal processional where death awaited them at the end of the parade. Paul had been captured by God to preach the gospel.
- In the Roman triumphal processional victorious generals paraded through the streets leading the captives to death. Plutarch describes one scene in which the king, his family, and their friends and personal attendants were led through the streets as representatives of the vanquished as a prelude to their execution. Even the children were led as slaves, unaware of the fate that awaited them at the end of the parade (Cf. Plutarch, *Romulus* XXV.4-XXXIV). Cleopatra cries at the point of her defeat, "If the gods of Rome have power or mercy left . . . let them not suffer me to be led in living triumph to your disgrace" (See Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit*, 25).

#### **The Aroma of Christ**

- The burning incense during the parade was a smell of victory to some; death to others.
- 2:16 Who is sufficient for such matters? 3:5 our sufficiency is in God.

#### **Letters of Recommendation**

- Paul's opponents asked for such letters because they considered Paul's ministry as lacking anything to commend it. Where were Paul's credentials?
- vs. 7-11 - The new covenant is written on hearts that are able to change. The Spirit gives life.
- God empowers ordinary people for the task of ministry, and that the ultimate test of our ministries is the formation of communities of the Spirit.

<b>Week 4</b>	<b>The Glory of Ministry (3:7-18)</b>
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## **1. Argument of the Text**

### **1. The Glory of Ministry (3:7-18)**

#### **Losing Heart**

- “Where is the glory?” Much of contemporary church life does not appear glorious. Such disappointments undermine our own confidence that God is at work in the context of the church. It is enough to cause us all to lose heart.

#### **Paul’s Example of Moses’ Ministry (diakonia)**

- Unquestionably, Moses had a glorious ministry. Jesus’ ministry is compared to Moses’ ministry in John 6. What are some examples of Moses’ mighty ministry?
- How does Paul’s ministry compare to Moses’?

#### **Contemporary Examples:**

- Share stories of times when you experienced the loving face of Jesus shining in the face of one of your brothers and sisters, so that we can behold the glory of the Lord. Whenever we see people abandoning themselves for the sake of others, we see the transformation of our lives from one degree of glory to another.

## **2. Memorable Text**

2 Corinthians 3:18 is the heart of Paul’s desire for the Church.

**Week 5****We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord (4:1-6)****Preaching Jesus**

- What would cause Paul to lose heart? The veil is over the face of his fellow Israelites. The veil is still covering the faces of unbelievers. Outwardly, his ministry is not glorious.
- What first attracted you to the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- A timeless debate: "From Above" or "From Below"
- What is the content of the sermon that preaches Jesus Christ as Lord?

*"The temptation of those who face resistance to the gospel is to ask what we can do to change the response (see 2:17ff). Paul insists on preaching a gospel that listeners will often disbelieve. His answer here is shocking to a mentality that assumes that the results depend on our ingenuity and that we have the right to expect favorable outcomes.*

*Paul confronts discouragement with the knowledge that he is not responsible for the results; if the people are blinded, it is neither his fault nor the fault of the gospel. He will continue to preach that "Jesus is Lord" because this message has transformed his life. He will focus on this message, making himself its slave (4:5), trusting that God is responsible for the results.*

*In recalling God's words "let light shine out of darkness" (4:6), Paul refers to the creation story, indicating that the glory of the creation story has occurred once more in the Christ event. He also refers to exilic passages that described God's promises for a restoration of the people. According to Isaiah 9:2, "On you who dwell in the shadow of death a light shall shine." Isaiah 60:1 indicates that "The glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Because he has seen the glory, he continues to preach "Jesus Christ is Lord." Whether he is successful or not, he knows what message transformed his life." -- James Thompson, *Preaching 2 Corinthians* (unpublished manuscript).*

<b>Week 6</b>	<b>A Ministry Empowered by God (4:7-5:10)</b>
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### **Jars of Clay**

- The fallibility, frailty, and weakness of Paul's life is compared to a breakable and common jar. But within the clay pot, is a priceless treasure.
- Paul's fragile life demonstrates to the whole world that it is God's power and not his. It is a ministry for the sake of others and for the sake of God's glory.
- The catalogue of sufferings is the first of four instances in 2 Corinthians in which Paul lists the sufferings that characterize his ministry. In 6:4-10 and 11:23-33, he offers a list of sufferings as his credentials for ministry; in 12:10 he is "content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ." Not weakness, not failure, not misfortune, BUT the power of God working in his life.

This passage challenges our North American context. We take pride in our resources. We do not resonate with the image of the "earthen vessels." We measure the success of our ministries by the standards we have learned in the marketplace, through technology, or in the laboratory. Paul insists that ministry occurs in the context of human limitations. In the North American context, the passage is a reminder that our extraordinary resources do not ensure the effectiveness of our ministry. We may wish to trust our capacity to manage the ministry of God through our own ingenuity, market analysis, power, and money, but only God can build a church.

<b>Week 7</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>A Ministry Empowered by God (4:7-5:10) [part 2]</b>
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Paul's contrast between the momentary affliction and the eternal glory extends to 5:1-10, where he elaborates on the hope that undergirds his confidence. His afflictions are not a source of discouragement. Instead of seeing his body as a fragile clay jar, he now describes his earthly existence as that of an earthly tent that will be destroyed and replaced by the building from God, *an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*. In the meantime, we long to be with God but we live in this fragile body, away from the Lord. Either way, Paul will live a life pleasing to the Lord because what we do while still in the body still matters to God. See Phil 1:20-27.

### Two Readings of the Christian Tradition (future tense vs. present tense)

Earthly existence that ends in death. Only those alive at the parousia will not die.	A time between death and resurrection.	Heavenly existence where those in Christ will be "clothed over" (v. 3).
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Earthly existence that ends in death. Only those alive at the parousia will not die.	Heavenly existence where those in Christ will be "clothed over" (v. 3).
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- See 1 Cor 15:35-54. We will not be disembodied spirits but will have new heavenly bodies.
- Paul is still confronting in 2 Cor the false notion at Corinth (1 Cor 15) that Christians are already raised and that there is no future resurrection. But the context of 2 Cor adds the element of suffering, namely, our present bodies seem to be "wasting away."
- Being found unclothed is not equal to a disembodied state. That is reading into the text something Paul does not say. Being found unclothed is equated to death, and Paul is confident that God will not allow death to win but will resurrect him and clothe him.
- Paul's emphasis is not on "when" one will receive a heavenly body, but on the "if" one will receive a heavenly body. Paul's statements reinforce his confidence for a future resurrection body. To attempt to figure out the step-by-step method or timetable of the afterlife is an endeavor to "miss the point." And Paul knows, it is not up to him whether he lives or dies.
- My own conviction is best expressed in 1 John 3:2-3. Paul does not explain the fate of those who die before the parousia.
- Unlike his opponents, who measure everything according to visible results, Paul says, *we walk by faith and not by sight* because *God has given the Spirit, guaranteeing what is to come* (vv. 7, 5).
- Appearing before the Judgment Seat in 5:10 is one of the clearest statements about a last judgment in the NT.
  - a. See also Roms 2:1-16; 14:10-12.
  - b. In Acts 18:12-17 Paul appears before the Roman Judgment Seat that is at Corinth (on the south side of the ancient Forum).

<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Paul's Ministry as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)</b>
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Paul reminds his readers that his defense is intended to encourage them to boast on his behalf (5:12) and recognize that his ministry is for them (5:13). And in the midst of Paul's defense of himself, Paul restates the heart of the gospel—"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15).

- A** 5:11-12—Paul persuades others (including the Corinthians) because he knows the fear of the Lord (rooted in the previously phrase about judgment).
- B** 5:13—(gar) Paul summarizes his selfless ministerial existence
- C** 5:14-15—(gar) Paul's selfless ministry is based on the Christian story of Christ's sacrifice, which defines all Christian existence.
- D** 5:16 —(hoste) Paul envisions a new way of being because of Christ's sacrifice.
- D'** 5:17 —(hoste) All who are in Christ participate in a new world.
- C'** 5:18-19 —(de) Paul's ministry is both defined and granted by God's act of reconciliation in the cross of Christ.
- B'** 5:20—Paul summarizes his ministry of persuasion.
- A'** 5:21-6:2—Paul persuades the Corinthians to be reconciled to God.

1. He died for all—What are the implications?
  - a. If this is the foundation for all missions, if this becomes our creed, then how will it effect budget decisions, building programs, resolutions of conflicts, navigating transitions, etc.?
  - b. If this is our story, then it effects what kind of church we become. There is a new way of seeing one another; a new way of seeing the world.
2. Therefore, all died—What are the implications?
  - a. We are not dead and finished.
  - b. He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised again.
3. We no longer regard anyone from a worldly point of view.
4. There is a new creation, the old is gone, and the new has come.
5. We have been given a message & a ministry of reconciliation.
6. We become the righteousness of God.

But that reconciliation is not yet complete. Therefore, because one died for all and it is our compulsion to preach, I urge you to be reconciled (6:1-2). Although the Corinthians know, "one died for all," they have not yet tapped into the power of that story to create a new community. The conclusion of the story depends upon the Corinthians' response to God's reconciling activity and Paul's selfless labor on their behalf.

Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Paul's Ministry as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (5:11-6:2) (part 2)</b>
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“Despite centuries of translating 5:17 in an individualistic way (“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”), the context indicates that the NRSV has correctly rendered the sentence, “If anyone is in Christ, *there is* a new creation.” That is, Paul is describing his new way of knowing. The believer who has been shaped by the Christ event sees the world in an entirely new way. The hope expressed in the Old Testament for a “new heaven and new earth” (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) has become a reality for those who share the cross of Christ” –James Thompson, *Preaching 2 Corinthians*, unpublished manuscript.

“Isaiah 40-66 consistently refers to the new thing that the Lord will do for Israel. In 42:9, the prophet says, “See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare.” In 43:18—19, he says, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing.” The former things are God’s past redemptive acts—creation, exodus (43:18; 51:10—11), the giving of the covenant. When God does a new thing, Israel will return to Zion in a New Exodus (43:16—17), and God will establish a new covenant (42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 61:8). God has acted through the servant to take away Israel’s sins, to end the state of hostility, and to proclaim Israel’s salvation. This narrative of Israel accounts for the logic of Paul’s argumentation in his defense, for both the new covenant and the new creation are now a reality (3:1—18; 5:17); the servant has died for the people (5:14), and he is the prophetic voice who proclaims the time of salvation.” –James Thompson, *Reading the Letters as Narratives*.

We have a new way of knowing and seeing. We see according to what is unseen, i.e., by faith. We don’t see according to what is seen, i.e., according to the flesh. Paul knows he will not appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ based on his ability to speak or because of his afflictions have attacked the tent of his body. He knows he will be judged by the guarantee of the Spirit of an eternal house that comes from God.

Life doesn’t make much sense when we see...

- A family taking a pay cut in order to spend more time with aging parents.
- A student choosing to major in social work when her aptitude scores indicate she could make more money in another major.
- A woman spending her life in the slums of Calcutta for the sake of the least of these.
- A preacher willing to be beaten, jailed, starved, abandoned, or shipwrecked. A preacher who accepts such affliction on behalf of a group of people who don’t seem to care (their refusal to “boast”).

...It makes sense only to those who have seen a new world, God’s new creation.

<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Paul's Hardships as a Basis for Appeal for Reconciliation (6:3-7:4)</b>
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What do you say when someone slanders the church?

Paul gives the Corinthians a list of things to say when they hear accusations against him. Paul desires that they boast of him. In 6:4-10, Paul gives them a “boast list” for the sake of the ministry of reconciliation. Since we see everyone in a new light (5:16-17), because “Christ died for all,” then the Corinthians can see Paul differently too.

The catalogue of sufferings in 4:7-12 was the first of four instances in 2 Corinthians in which Paul lists the sufferings that characterize his ministry. In 6:4-10 and 11:23-33, he offers a list of sufferings as his credentials for ministry; in 12:10 he is “content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ.” Not weakness, not failure, not misfortune, BUT the power of God working in his life.

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| 6:11-13   | <b>A</b>  | Paul's appeal for reconciliation  |
| 6:14a     | <b>B</b>  | An initial exhortation not to be yoked with unbelievers                               |
| 6:14b-16a | <b>C</b>  | Five rhetorical questions showing that believer and unbeliever have nothing in common |
| 6:16b     | <b>D</b>  | For the Corinthians are the temple of the Living God                                  |
| 6:16c-18  | <b>C'</b> | Scriptural proofs that the Corinthians are God's temple                               |
| 7:1       | <b>B'</b> | Therefore, possessing these promises, the Corinthians should avoid defilement.        |
| 7:2-4     | <b>A'</b> | Paul's appeal for reconciliation  |

- Because the Corinthians need to be reconciled to Paul (6:11-13; 7:2-4) and to God (5:18-19), the focus of chapters 1-7 is reconciliation. Paul's statement in 7:2-4 functions as a summary of the argument of chapters 1-7.

*Make room in your hearts for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. I often boast about you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction.*

## A DETAILED LOOK AT THE HARDSHIP LIST OF 2 CORINTHIANS 6

vv 4b-5 three triads introduced by “great endurance”	in great endurance	Overview
	in afflictions, in troubles, in calamities	General afflictions
	in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots	Hardships imposed on him by others
	in labors, in sleepless nights, in going hungry	Hardships self-imposed for the sake of the ministry
vv. 6-7a two groups of four	in sincerity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness	Virtues of his conduct
	in Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in word of truth, in power of God	Divine assistance
vv 7b-8a three contrasts	through weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left	Whether for good or ill Paul is armed with righteous weapons
	through honor and dishonor	
	through ill repute and good repute	
vv8b-10 seven antitheses	as deceitful and we are truthful	The paradox of suffering
	as unknown and we are known	
	as dying and behold we live	
	as punished and we are not put to death	
	as grieving but we are always rejoicing	
	as poor but enriching many	
	as having nothing and yet we possess everything	

<b>Week 11</b>	<b>A Time for Rejoicing (7:5-16); Introduction to Giving (8 &amp; 9)</b>
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**1. Argument of the Text**

- i. A Time for Rejoicing (7:5-16)
- b. The Grace that Continues (8-9)
  - i. The Partnership of Giving (8)
  - ii. The Blessings of Giving (9)

<b>Week 11-13</b>	<b>The Partnership of Giving (8-9)</b>
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8:1-6 Paul explains how the grace of God was manifested in the earnestness and generosity of the Macedonians for the collection, resulting in Paul's appeal to Titus to resume the work of the collection.

8:7-15 Paul appeals to the Corinthians to resume the collection that they began last year, so that there will be an equality among the churches.

8:16-24 Paul commends to the Corinthians a delegation consisting of Titus and two unnamed brothers.

9:1-5 Paul explains that he sent the delegation to ensure that the collection would be ready, lest he and the Corinthians lose face before the Macedonians.

9:6-9 Paul summons the Corinthians to liberal giving.

9:10-15 Paul explains how God will enrich the Corinthians to give liberally. As a result, God will be praised, and there will be a profound unity between Gentile and Jewish Christians. (Source: Frank Matera, *II Corinthians*, New Testament Library, WJK, 2003.)

<b>Frequency of the Word <i>Charis</i> or Grace</b>		<b>Words Used for the Collection No Mention of Money</b>	<b>Other Key Words</b>
8:1	9:8	Ministry—8:4; 9:1, 13	Abound—8:2, 7; 9:8, 12
8:4	9:14	Partnership—8:4; 9:13	Abundance—8:2, 14
8:6	9:15	Gracious Gift—8:6, 7, 19	Need—8:14; 9:12
8:7		Generous Gift—8:20	Generosity—8:2; 9:11, 13

8:9	In this matter—9:3
8:16	In this undertaking—9:4
8:19	Bountiful Gift—9:5
	Service—9:12

The above list of words emphasize the gracious aspect of the collection, since the collection is more than an appeal for money, it is an invitation to participate in God's abundant grace. God is the source of all grace. God enables the believers to be gracious and generous by supplying them with the means to do so. Believers can be generous because God is the source and origin of all generosity. Participation in the collection is a participation in God's grace for the purpose of God's praise.

### *Giving Principles from Corinthians*

1. Individually	1 Cor. 16:2	Personal Responsibility
2. Regularly	1 Cor. 16:2	Like Clockwork
3. Proportionately	1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:11-12	As You Have Prospered
4. Generously	2 Cor. 8:1-2	From Your Heart
5. Voluntarily	2 Cor. 8:3-4, 12	Willingly
6. Personally	2 Cor. 8:5	Giving of Yourself
7. Lovingly	2 Cor. 8:7-8	With Sincerity
8. Sacrificially	2 Cor. 8:3, 9	Beyond The Comfort Zone
9. Completely	2 Cor. 8:6, 10-12	Stick With It
10. Acceptably	2 Cor. 8:12	In God's Eyes
11. Purposefully	2 Cor. 9:7	Not An Afterthought
12. Cheerfully	2 Cor. 9:7	With Joy
13. Expectantly	2 Cor. 9:8-11	God Will Bless
14. Accordingly	2 Cor. 8:13-15; 9:12-15	To Meet Needs
15. Reciprocally	2 Cor. 8:13-15; 9:8-9	Equality
16. Openly	2 Cor. 8:16-21	With Transparency

17. Reverently

2 Cor. 8:19; 9:11-12

To Honor the Lord

- Is it harder to give or easier to give in our society?
- Name a time when you witnessed reciprocal giving. (God gives to us so that we in turn will mutually exchange our gifts with one another)
- How many of these principles can you find in Phil. 4:10-20?
- How many of these principles can you find in your personal giving?
- What is your greatest motivation to practice abundant giving?
  - Which passage teaches this most clearly?
- Designate ways you will increase your giving today.
  - Examples: time, talent, emotions, finances, education, possessions, energy, friendship, love, faith, life, etc. God gives many abounding gifts—2 Cor. 8:7-9.
  - Be concrete. For example, time—I will give two hours to help BOBS; possessions—I will donate 5% of my library to HCC; talent—I will sing with the Hospice Singers once/month.

**Week 14****True and False Boasting (10:1-18)****Overview**

The word boasting occurs 19 times in 2 Cor. 10-13. 2 Cor. 1:14 is the key verse to interpreting the section. Paul desires to boast about the Corinthians. His aim throughout is to build them up (2 Cor. 12:19 and 13:10). Although he has the weapons to “tear down” (10:4), that is not his purpose (10:8). He boasts that Christ gave him the authority to build up, not tear down. He defends his ministry by noting that whether he is present or absent, he fulfills his role (10:11).

2 Cor. 10:12-18 – Paul spreads the gospel. He has fulfilled his commission by doing what the Lord assigns. The Lord commends you when you do his will. We can commend one another when we do his will. This is our boast.

**A Few Details**

- Paul uses a strong word in 10:1 often translated “urge,” “appeal,” “beseech,” or “encourage.” The appeal is usually followed by an extended moral exhortation. Contrast this with the softer “I ask” in 10:2. The irony of Paul’s appeal throughout 2 Cor. 10-12 is prominent.
- Paul’s appeal to them so that he will not have to act boldly when he comes. He has the ability to act boldly (using military imagery), but his “meekness” and “gentleness” is a demonstration of the character of Christ. To reject Paul as “lowly” is to reject the character of Christ. By misinterpreting the humble way Paul acted towards them as weakness, the Corinthians have misunderstood the gospel itself.
- 10:12—Paul will not compare himself with those who commend themselves by comparing themselves to others (a faulty standard). Yet, Paul implicitly compares himself with the intruding apostles (10:13-16) by showing that his missionary activity is determined by the measure that God assigned to him. Therefore, the only standard for commendation comes from the Lord.
- Note the translation of the word *kanon* in 2 Cor 10:13, 15. Normally the word is translated “rule,” “standard,” or “norm.” (For example, the Bible is referred to as the canon of Scripture). Here, it seems to refer to “place.” NRSV translates it “field” and “sphere of action” respectively. So what is the standard for commendation? Are other people the standard for comparison? The standard is what God has assigned. If there is any measuring to be done, God will do it. And Paul is emphatic; he will not boast or cross over that “limit.” Paul will not preach where God has not assigned him. Implicitly, Paul is accusing the “super” apostles that they are trespassing in Corinth.
- Paul is the only one who can boast about the work at Corinth. He will use that record of accomplishment as a commendation for work elsewhere. So again, his letter of recommendation is the Corinthians.
- Since Paul established the church at Corinth, he does not need any other commendation to come and see them again (13:1).

**Week 15****The Fool's Speech (11:1-12:13)**

The **question** from last week: Are we reading the text differently? Normally we read the text for facts, information, and doctrine. Why are we not reading 2 Corinthians this way?

**Answer:** To read any text, we must know both focus (what it says) and function (how it says it). I am emphasizing the function of the text. You cannot know what a text says unless you also know how a text says it. In class, I have called this process “a rhetorical reading of the text.” Form is another way to talk about genre. Genre: A group of written texts based on distinctive, recurring, recognizable and coherent structures of writing. Today we are looking at a genre commonly labeled, “the fool’s speech.”

### The Fool's Speech (11:1-12:13)

- After stating, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (10:17), Paul reverses course and begins to boast. For this reversal, he calls himself a “fool” (11:1, 16, 17, 21; 12:11). But the Corinthians have left him little choice since they have not defended him or boasted about him. His concern is to protect his ministry (12:11).

The Prologue (11:1-21)—He calls upon the Corinthians to bear with him while he boasts.

- Note Paul’s relationship as a father protecting a bride. His understanding of that relationship motivates him to protect this congregation.
- Paul refuses to allow some at Corinth to consider Paul their client. He did not want patrons at Corinth because it compromised his relationship as father. When Paul speaks of the Philippians supporting him financially, he uses the term “partnership” (Phil 4:15-17). Obviously, there is something different in the way the Corinthians viewed the relationship. Since the Corinthians saw his refusal of money as a refusal of friendship, Paul had to demonstrate his love for them in other ways. Financial support is a primary topic of 1 Cor. 9. If his refusal was a sin, he apologizes (12:13).
- Yet, it seems, the “super apostles” not only accept money, they conduct their ministry in such a way that it denies the gospel.
- 11:17—he is not boasting in the Lord (10:17), except when he boasts in his weakness (11:30; 12:9). Here he is boasting in a way that commends him rather than God.

### Boasting

- He tells what he courageously endured for the sake of the gospel (11:21-29).
  - Paul’s credentials (11:22-23a)
  - His labors, imprisonments, beatings, and brushes with death (11:23b)
  - Five brushes with death (11:24-25)
  - Eight dangers while traveling (11:26)
  - Four hardships resulting from labor and toil (11:27)
  - Anxiety for the churches (11:28)
- Paul highlights his weaknesses
  - His rescue by God (11:30-33).
  - Paul speaks of visions, revelations, and miracles (12:1-10).
  - Paul concludes (12:11-13).

**Week 16****The Fool's Speech: Boasting and Spiritual Experience (12:1-13)**

Remember, Paul's intent is to boast only in those things that show his weakness (11:30).

1. First, he boasts about an escape that he could not pull off by himself (11:31-33).

Boasting and Spiritual Experience (12:1-10)

2. Second, he boasts about a vision and a revelation that he cannot talk about (an "unutterable utterance" (12:2-5). Something that happened 14 years ago. He sees no benefit in sharing the story now. Although the experience may have assured him that he was Christ's apostle, it did not provide him with any "revelation" with which he could build up the church. Therefore, it is unprofitable to boast about something he cannot talk about. Using synthetic parallelism, he tells the same story twice. The experience was not of his own doing, so he can only boast that the experience was God's doing. Maybe he is contrasting himself with the "super apostles" who boast about heavenly visions and revelations.
3. Third, he boasts about a miracle that did not happen (12:6-10). Although the thorn cannot be identified (whether a physical ailment or opponents), because Paul does not say, he does say he received it in order to teach him about weakness. He could have taken pride in his experiences, visions, and revelations, but a thorn in his flesh arrived to teach him humility. It appears that the thorn was given at the same time, 14 years ago, as the vision and revelation.

Thorn Options: Although it is foolish to speculate about something that is unspoken.

- Tertullian—Head pain (an a host of physical ailments including eye trouble similar to Gal 4:13-16, epilepsy, and inability to speak well).
- Chrysostom—Opponents (e.g., the super apostles)
- Temptations of a sexual nature (due to a mistranslation in the Vulgate, "sting of the flesh"). Commonly understood until Luther and Calvin. Some today connect this to a psychological state, whether of temptation or grief.
- The various sufferings he endures and lists in the next paragraph.

Conclusion (12:11-13)

<b>Week 17</b>	<b>The Final Argument (2 Corinthians 12:14-13:13)</b>
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The Final Argument (12:14-13:13)

- a. A Ministry for Others (12:14-21).
  - i. 12:14 marks a new section, “I plan to come to you for a third time.” He alluded to the visit in 10:2, 11 and repeats his intention in 13:1.
  - ii. 12:14-18—Paul insists he will not be a financial burden when he visits and that neither he nor his associates have taken advantage of the Corinthians in the past.
  - iii. 12:19-21—Due to moral laxity, the Corinthians may not be prepared for his visit.
- b. Examine Yourselves (13:1-10).
  - i. 13:1-4—Paul warns those who have not repented of their moral laxity that he will not spare them.
    - 1. 2 Cor 10:1-18 and 12:14-13:13 brackets The Fool’s Speech.
    - 2. In both sections, Paul asserts that if he must, he can and will act boldly when he comes to Corinth (See 1 Cor 4:18-21).
  - ii. 13:5-10—Paul warns the community to test itself and put itself in order for the impending visit, since he will act with boldness when he arrives.
- c. God’s Grace (13:11-13)

“Since the first seven chapters of this letter deal with the events and questions surrounding Paul’s second (painful) visit to Corinth, this section, which focuses on Paul’s third and final visit, brings the letter to closure. The crisis of the second visit has been resolved (chaps. 1-7), and Paul has exhorted the Corinthians to resume the collection they began last year (chaps. 8-9). Therefore, he can now return to Corinth for his third and final visit, a visit that will bring about complete reconciliation with the church if the Corinthians heed his warnings about the intruding apostles, and if those who have sinned finally repent.” –Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: WJK, 2003), 291.